



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

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LWVWA Testimony

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Subject: Reclaimed Water Rule

The League of Women Voters has taken a keen interest in water resources and safe drinking water throughout our 95 year history. Our national position; ***Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment***, has guided our study and monitoring of water resource planning and management in Washington state. The League believes ***Water use efficiency practices are essential to maintain state water resources***. We supported the 2006 legislative direction to the Department of Ecology (Ecology) to develop and adopt rules on all aspects of reclaimed water use and we applaud both the open and inclusive rule making process Ecology and the Department of Health convened and the work of the technical advisory committee.

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports the proposed new rule, Chapter 173-219 Washington Administrative Code (WAC) with some hesitation. We understand the important role of a robust reclaimed water program in both augmenting supply and protecting the quality of waters receiving wastewater effluent. We are not hesitant about the need for a more efficient and resource sensitive use of our precious and limited water supply. We are however concerned that establishing a new water flow pattern by capturing water that would have returned to streams after traditional waste water treatment will have unanticipated consequences to the ecosystem. We are reassured by the efforts identified in the rule to address downstream impairment to quantity and quality but are wary that emerging issues of water temperature, changing concentrations of chemicals or pH will not be adequately addressed in the permitting process.

It is clear reviewing the rule that extensive consideration has been given to impairment and downstream water rights. We understand these are very complicated issues and we trust Department of Ecology will meet established regulation in permitting reclaimed water facilities. Our concern is what happens after permitting is complete and the situation changes. Our current drought scenario and the severe drought in other western states are likely a harbinger of future climate changes. How does water that has been allotted "an exclusive right to use" per RCW 90.46 fit into the hierarchy of water right use curtailment particularly reclaimed water that may be conveyed by surface water from point of generation to point of diversion ? (proposed WAC 173-219-540)

We are well aware that reclaiming water is one solution to managing water in a changing climate. We support that option but as history has shown us good solutions to one problem often cause other problems. Our second concern for hesitation relates to emerging issues of surface water such as volume, temperature, pH or other substances of concern. The rule identifies the lead agency and Treatment Facilities Manual as the arbitrator for these issues. We believe ***maximum protection of public health and the environment*** particularly at this time of changing environment call for a more rigorous review. We recommend continuing a technical advisory committee of scientific and medical resources to address problems and to identify strategies to address emerging issues.

We support this rule with the understanding there must be clear provisions for it to evolve as the health and environmental situation changes.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann M. Murphy".

President, League of Women Voters of Washington